EML Accent

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## Not for the Lazy

—Gwendolyn Blume

The formative moment for my time as a student and, ultimately, my career as a professor occurred in the third week of my first-year Russian class when I was a junior in high school. Julia Aleksandrovna, my amazing instructor, had spent the first two weeks of the semester attempting to teach us the Cyrillic alphabet. She would draw the Cyrillic "r" (which looks like an English p) and say, "It looks like a balloon filled with airrrrr." She encouraged us to make flashcards and go over them at home. When we came in to the classroom on that third week, she had us sit on the floor in a circle and she presented us with flashcards and asked us to make the sounds that accompanied each Cyrillic letter. Almost no one could identify the whole alphabet, and on the more difficult letters, over half the class remained silent.

Julia Aleksandrovna stood up and threw the flashcards on the floor. "I spend hours coming up with these stupid tricks to help you learn these letters," she shouted, pointing to the R balloon up on the board. "These are for children! I spent two weeks in class help-

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## How I lost My Virginity in Germany

—Louise Sullivan-Blum

I grew up hearing my father occasionally default to German, especially when he was angry. I learned early that German is a good language for swearing, full of satisfyingly guttural snarls and visceral, spit-laden growls. He had special phrases that he directed toward us, his children. I grew up thinking they were endearments. When I finally studied German, I discovered that all those years he'd actually been telling us to get lost.

Learning German has been one of the most important things that I have ever done. It allowed me to read Rainer Rilke in his original language. It permitted me to bicycle through remote villages buried deep in the Austrian Alps, and to find work as a mother's helper for several months just because I struck up a conversation with a woman in a post office. It enabled me to backpack from Dubrovnik to Prague as the iron curtain fell, at a time when no one spoke English, but many people still grudgingly consented to communicate in German. It helped me get a

friend I was traveling with to a hospital in Budapest when she was felled by a back injury. Ultimately, however, the most important reason to know German was that it allowed me to successfully dispose of my virginity, in a small picturesque town in Southern Germany, with a sexy young Palestinian man with dark curly hair and beguiling eyes. Because he spoke no English and I knew no Arabic, our language in common was German, and so it was that we haltingly, and carefully, came to know each other intimately, in foreign phrases that we made our own.

When I think back on the things that I have done in my life, the memories of the times I have had to rely on another language are the ones that are the most satisfying. I have never felt more on edge, more

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Please, send news, announcements, and contributions to: ksanner@mansfield.edu

## Sweet

—Kristin Sanner

I'll be the first to admit that I initially studied foreign languages because of the food. In sixth grade, I took two terms of "language exploration," one in French and one in Spanish. Mrs. Billet played memorization games with us, which was fine, but Mr. Rupert brought large paper bags full of candy. Anyone who could recite the day's dialogue flawlessly earned her pick from the candy bag. I practiced and practiced, earned my pick, and almost always chose a stick of rock candy-- a relic from my grandparents' era that always delivered on its pure, sweet, sugary promise. Theoretically, if the courses worked, they fed the formal languages courses that began in 8th grade. For me, there was never any question; I wanted more of that candy.

By the time I reached eighth grade, however, my tastes had changed. No longer did I want rock candy. Now I wanted to listen to music and absorb all of the material in those heavy books I had to lug from class to class. I enrolled in French I and began a nine year, intensive study of the language.

Why did I decide to spend so much time learning, absorbing and falling in love with the language? For one, it opened up a new world. When I looked out of my bedroom window, I could see cornfields; when I looked out of

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## Sensory Experiences

—Andrea Harris

One of the most mind-altering experiences of my life was spending a month in France as a high school freshman. A group of fifteen or so students from Manchester, Vermont went to our host city of Caen in the northern province of Normandy in mid-winter. We lived with host families, went to classes at the lycee (high school), and went on field trips. We saw marvels like the city of Rouen where Joan of Arc was burned at the Stake and the tapestries of Bayeux. My family took me to the coast, to Mont St. Michel and the seaside cliff Etretat, painted by Monet. There's a lot I don't remember about my fourteenth year or many years since then, but I remember each of these things and many other experiences with the utmost clarity because they were complete sensory experiences: the lovely musty smell of the inside of a seven-hunred year old cathedral; the smell of diesel from a two-cylinder Citroen Deux Chevaux as my French mother, Madame LeDuc drove us to school; the flavors of the three-course lunch she prepared every day; the coffee-flavored éclair she bought me for an after-school snack; the cool style of the French teens with their scarves, boots, long sweaters, and long dark coats. The discomfort of expressing myself in another language is a distinct memory, as is the satisfaction of proving to myself that I could do it. Everything looked and felt and was different and everything was fascinating to me.

I had the amazing good fortune to be able to go to Geneva, Switzerland four years later, as a high school

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## News from The Frederick Douglass Institute

In March, Dr. Lynn Pifer led the Write a Conference Paper Proposal Workshop, which helped prepare students to submit their work to the Douglass Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Conference at Bloomsburg University on April 14-15. Judging of the essay submissions for the Frederick Douglass Student Essay Contest is currently underway. One deserving student will receive the Grand Prize, a $200 book scholarship! Students may also apply for the Frederick Douglass Student Scholarship. See the FDI web page for further information and an application form; applications are due to Dr. Lynn Pifer, 4b Belknap Hall by Friday, April 15. More information on each of these opportunities is available on the FDI web page, http://mansfield.edu/frederick-douglass-institute/ or from Dr. Lynn Pifer lpifer@mansfield.edu

## That Is not What I Meant!

—Brad Holtman

It helps to have a sense of humor and few inhibitions when learning a new language.

Fresh out of my college French major, I thought I could make my way in any conversation. One day on the shore of Lake Neuchâtel, I listened with Swiss friends to a radio report about chemicals used in food to increase their stability and shelf life. We all disapproved of these, and I opined, "Moi aussi, je déteste les préservatifs dans la nourriture." From their roars of laughter and mimed difficulties in chewing, I soon joined in on their hilarity. One of those "false friends" that I had so arduously learned had nonetheless slipped me up now. What I hated in food was not preservatives, but condoms!

I also recall one of the female American students during my junior year in France asking a man passing by if he could tell her the time. She chose the literal translation of "Do you have the time?" or "Pardon, Monsieur, avez-vous le temps?" The man indignantly (probably to her ultimate benefit) replied, "Mademoiselle, je n'ai ni le temps, ni le désir!" I'll leave that one for you to work out yourself.

## Time Travel through Translation

—Judith Sornberger

Writer, translator, and scholar Edith Grossman refers to translating a poem as "bringing it over" into English. I love the phrase because it implies that translation is some kind of heroic quest and that the translated poem is the prize won and brought back to the community. But I didn't feel like a knight in search of the Grail when I began translating the poems, written in Old French, by the fourteenth century poet Christine de Pisan.

I had always been fascinated by Christine who was a contemporary of Joan of Arc. She was the first woman we know of who earned her living by her pen. In fact, after her husband's early death, she supported her children and her mother by her writings. Her *The Book of the City of Ladies* is a defense of womankind, and I liked to think of her as an early feminist.

So when it came time for me to consider my options for satisfying the language requirement for my Ph.D., I immediately thought of translating some of Christine's poems. Although I had studied Spanish and Russian, I didn't know any more French than what I learned from the old Beatles song "Michelle, ma belle." To remedy that problem, I took a ten credit hour French course that met twice a day, Monday through Friday. It was as close to full immersion as I could have gotten under the circumstances.

Nevertheless, when it came time to work on my translations of Christine's lyric poems and ballades, five years had passed, and I felt intimidated by the task before me. What had made me think that, with only the equivalent of two semesters of French behind me, I not only could translate poems written

in French, but also could translate them from Old French, which was almost another language? I called my advisor, the Medievalist Dr. Paul Olson, whom I greatly admired and was mortally afraid of letting down. "Paul, I don't know if I can do this," I admitted. "Sure you can," he said. "Just put your French dictionary, your Old French vernacular, and Christine's poems on the table in front of you and do one poem a day. Ten days later I had finished my translation project.

I tell my writing students not to refer to authors by their first names, that doing so is disrespectful. Yet I always find myself referring to de Pisan as Christine. How could I otherwise? As I translated her poems about her love for her husband, the ways she missed him and still desired him, I felt like I was reaching back through the centuries and two languages to touch the hand of a sister-writer.

## Student Awards

**English**

-Outstanding Senior Nominee-
***Brittany Estep***
-Outstanding Major-
***Rebeckah Wright***
-Bernie Koloski Award for Outstanding Achievement in Amer. Lit.-
***Christina Rinnert***
-Larry Uffelman Award for Outstanding Achievement in Brit. Lit.-
***Matthew Getz***
-Henry Dyck Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Hist. of the Eng. Language
***Amanda Cino***

**Modern Languages**

-Outstanding Senior Nominee-
***Krista Hutcherson***
-Outstanding Achievement in French-
**Mona Chalabi**
**Jenna Alderman**
-Outstanding Achievement in German -
***Morgan Schreckengost***
***Adam Toth***
***Amanda Cino***
***Andrea Moon***
***Paul Sallemi***
-Outstanding Achievement in Spanish-
**Amanda Rhone**
**Ginnette Moskowitz**

## Not for the Lazy

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ing you to learn the alphabet. But I can't teach you Russian in four hours in the classroom every week. If you don't go home, and do the work yourself, and spend time on memorizing and practicing and working with the language, you will never learn Russian. You will never learn *anything*."

Julia Aleksandrovna was right about the Cyrillic alphabet, of course, but I realized immediately that she was right about what it means to be a student and to take classes. What happens inside the classroom comprises such a small amount of the time we have at school, and all of the many hours outside of the classroom are hours that we are responsible for our own learning and our own progress. I knew, as soon as she said it, that if I didn't take the time to read and review the materials and to practice the skills that I was being taught, I would never learn anything. My high school was obsessed with "active learning" and "inquiry-based approaches to the subject," but only Julia Aleksandrovna told us what we needed to hear. Only Julia Aleksandrovna *could* tell us what we needed to hear, because only in a foreign language classroom does our progress depend so clearly on the amount of work we are willing to do in order to learn. If it weren't for first-year Russian, I never would have made it through graduate school or gotten a job as a professor.

## How I lost My Virginity...

*(Continued from page 1)*

accomplished, more independent, or more brave than I have when venturing outside the comfort zone of English.

I have to say that it is crucial to learn another language if for no other reason than that it is important to make love in as many languages as possible. Why limit yourself if you don't have to?

## Sensory Experiences

*(Continued from page 2)*

senior. Again, my experiences were incredible. Nothing had prepared me for these trips, because nothing can prepare you for travel to another country, which might as well be travel to another world. This seems to be a universal reaction to study abroad: I have never met anyone who did not feel this way about it.

I was able to do this at a young age because the study of foreign language was a given in American public schools in the 1970s and continued to be for the next decade at least. I began studying French in seventh grade in my New Jersey junior high school. Upon moving to Vermont, where language study didn't start until ninth grade, I was placed into junior year French. Eventually, I was taking French as an independent study with a great teacher, who helped

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## Sweet

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the windows at school, it was more of the same. I wanted to see, hear, and experience something different, but my parents never had enough money for us to vacation anywhere more exotic than the state park. In French class, I listened to Edith Piaf records during a translation exercise, ate crepes during a cultures unit, and for 45 minutes each day, I spoke in a language not native to central Pennsylvania.

Many years later, I may not have daily, practical applications for what I learned in French classes, but I do draw on the lessons I learned from Mme. Evans and my college professors. I learned that no matter how hard I work, I can always work harder, but I think I also learned that I can't live without something sweet in my life. In fact, I'm trying to learn Italian right now and in a way, I've returned to 6th grade language exploration class. I'm bribed into learning the phrases and the dialogues, not by candy this time, but by the sheer lyrical beauty of the language. Of course, I'm learning to speak Italian because it will help me connect with native speakers when I visit the country this summer, but I'm also learning it, quite simply, because it is beautiful. Like all language learning, it has also taught me to listen to and appreciate the music of human communication. Imagine what the world would be like if more people could hear that music and taste that sweetness.

## Sigma Tau Delta News

Nine new members will be inducted into the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society on Tuesday, April 26th. New inductees include: Mike Babbish; Jael Greene; Marta Knapp; Francine Luther; Christina Rinnert; Paul Sallemi; Brett Shearer; Stephen Stefan; and Meganne Wheeler. English and foreign languages majors and minors and creative writing minors who have completed at least three semesters of coursework, and who have at least a 3.3 QPA are eligible to join. For more information, contact one of the faculty advisors: Dr. Kristin Sanner, Dr. Jimmy Guignard, or Dr. John Ulrich.

## Faculty News

February was a busy month for **Dr. Lynn Pifer,** whose Civil Rights Movement & Civil Rights novels podcast with Dennis was posted on the M.U. web page for Black History Month. She also gave a lecture on Slave Narratives and the Quest for Literacy at the Southeast Steuben County Library in Corning, NY and presented a paper on Sena Jeter Naslund's Four Spirits at the Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900.

In April **Dr. Fanny Arango-Keeth** and **Dr. William Keeth** presented their research at the 58th Annual Conference Rocky Mountain Council for Latin American Studies in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Dr. Arango's paper, "Género, nación y modernidad: las relaciones panamericanas de las escritoras del siglo XIX", represents another leg in her research in the area of 19th Century Latin American women writers. Dr. Keeth continues to work with the group of Peruvian poets from the *Generación del 50*. His paper, "The Transatlantic Poetics of Carlos Germán Belli", concentrates on the work of the most important members of this generation of poets.

**Dr. Greg Razran** was awarded a Fulbright Grant that supports his extensive research work in the Russian regions. The end result will be a brand new Critical Anthology of Contemporary Russian Fiction, in English. This breakthrough book, entitled "Never Heard of It: New Russian Writing from Brezhnev to Medvedev" will be submitted for publication to one of the University Presses, upon completion. His organic Fulbright Project, Voices from the Margins: Expanding the Canons of Contemporary Russian and American Literature also features guest lectures on U.S. Multicultural Literature at Universities throughout the Russian Regions. **Dr. Razran's** collection of poetry, *At The Dollar Store*, was published by Foothills Press this year.

*Death and the Downs: the Poetry of Charles Hamilton Sorley* includes a major section of **Dr. Larry Uffelman's** bibliography on the poet.

SIGMA TAU DELTA

BetterWorldBooks
WWW.BETTERWORLD.COM

Want do something great for the environment and help out a worthy cause? Donate your used books to Sigma Tau Delta's "Better World" book drive. Members of STD will set-up a collection table outside of the university bookstore during book buy-back week but you can donate before then too. Look for the large collection box inside of the department mailroom. They accept any type of book; books that cannot be resold are either donated to a third world education program or recycled. Check out and "like" the "Better World Book Drive Mansfield University" group on ***Facebook*** too!

## Sensory Experiences

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me prepare for the AP exam. It's worth noting that the schools I attended were not in well-funded, well-to-do school districts, but rather in pretty ordinary places.

I'm extremely thankful that, when I was growing up, the study of language had a respected and central place at all levels of the educational system, unlike today. In some states, such as Pennsylvania, language study is sometimes delayed until tenth grade. And at Mansfield and so many other universities, as we know, foreign language programs are being cut. My education, and my life, actually, would have been incomplete and far less rich without my years of French and my study abroad experiences. That the study of language should need a defense of this kind is one more sad story about education today.

As the editors of the Accent, we want you to know that we are grateful for any comments, concerns, or more importantly contributions to the next volume.

With any luck the next EML ACCENT will be even better.